

Curry Arts Journal 1997



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She looks at me and I shudder,
It's happened again and now I'm going under.
The trance, the dance
That has no rhythm, that keeps me under
But who is blind.
All time, nothing else.
Just me, my mind, my eyes, myself.
I know what I've seen and what
It means to have, to hold,
It's too damn cold.
Not here, not there,
Be wild, run free
Suppressed by a system that's disgusted
By me.
I look around and see death on all
Sides, even if I could run,
There's no where to hide.
The ghosts of my past rip through
My soul, I've been here too long,
To now lose control.
One switch and it's over, there's
No one to cry.
Is your race so superior that mine
Must die?

— Fran Whitney III

Christmas Presence

Rita always said, "I don't know where I got you from, Linnie girl."

I used to wonder, too. Rita was a tornado, a whirling dervish. I was the calm after her storm. I'd seen her lose her temper and it wasn't pretty. Some poor slob would say the wrong thing. Little dots of perspiration would break out on her forehead. Her red hair seemed to get a little curlier. She'd bare her claws. He'd never stand a chance.

She reined it in for me, though. I was ten when the Thomas' moved into old man Conroy's house. Carla took to me from the start, but her mom looked at me like I was some kind of foreign food she was afraid to taste. One afternoon Rita came to get me.

Mrs. Thomas came to the bedroom door. "Lynne, your mother is here."

"Hi, sweetie," Rita said.

I looked at her a little funny, 'cause of her dress. It was navy blue, to the knee - I'd never seen it before. She smelled different too - like the lilac bushes in our side yard.

"Supper's on, sweetheart. You too, Carla, - there's plenty."

Mrs. Thomas wrinkled up her nose. "Carla won't be able to make it tonight," she said.

Carla whined. "Please, Mommy. Pleeeeeeeez?"

"She has homework."

"No, I don't. I..."

Mrs. Thomas shot Carla a look that stopped her mid-sentence.

Well, Rita never said a word to Carla's mom, but her face was red. She strutted back across the street, yanking me along beside her. She threw her cigarette down on the ground and stomped on it. "Don't let those self-righteous sons-of-bitches get to you, sweetie," she said. "They don't have enough class to wipe your feet."

I pulled my arm away. "You're making a big deal out of nothing, Mum," I said.

I avoided Carla after that. I had enough friends anyway. Rita said her customers from the Pub were our family. She was right. If it wasn't for them, especially Pat, I don't think I could have gotten through.

Just before Thanksgiving, I was walking up the street and there was Pat, sitting on the front steps.

"I've been waiting for you, darlin'," he said. "Rita's had a little faintin' spell."

When we got to the hospital, she was sitting up in bed. "I'm getting out of here. There's nothing wrong with me," she said.

She looked fine to me, but her doctor didn't seem convinced. "We need to run a few tests," he said.

Next thing I knew, Rita was in surgery. Lung cancer. They couldn't get it all. She came home for a few days, made it through Thanksgiving. She even gave up smoking, but the cough didn't quit. I guess

I never paid much attention before. She'd been coughing as long as I remember.

Pat and I were going through her stuff, trying to find something to put her in. I pulled out her favorite, the green sequined number with the plunging neckline, but Pat nixed it.

I remember when she bought that dress. She twirled in front of the mirror. "Isn't this hot, baby?"

"It's great, Rita."

Rita must be pissed about how they did her up. The makeup was all wrong. She never left the house without full face makeup. Lipstick was the final touch. When I was little, I'd sit on her bed, quiet so as not to break her concentration. She could take the cover off that tube, twist it up out of its case, purse her lips and smooth it on in two seconds flat. She'd press her lips together to get it just right, then take her little finger and remove any excess.

If she caught me watching in the mirror, she'd laugh, then jump up and chase me through the house trying to plant a big red one on me. I hated that.

Christmas is the day after tomorrow. Pat came by and strung up all the lights, just like he does every year. We've got the large, old-fashioned kind. Mostly red and blue, but a little green and some yellow are mixed in. Once, when I was a kid, I heard Mr. Thomas say our house looked like a monument to the Fourth of July. Good!

We usually have the gang over Christmas Eve.

Rita said they have nowhere else to go. It must be true 'cause the phone has been ringing off the hook. They want to come this year, too. I'm not sure I have the menu right, but I think it's close. Those little wieners in barbecue sauce were a bitch to find. Most everyone is bringing something anyway.

It's late. I'm sitting in the dark and I take a cigarette out of my purse. I light it up. It burns my throat. I can't stand the taste, but watching the end burn I could swear that Rita's here. She's sitting on the couch. She's got on her blue silk pajamas. Her eyes go soft. "Don't let those sons-of-bitches get to you, baby," she says.

"No, Mum. I won't."

— Rachel Bernard

Get Back Into Bed

A dark angel of sin
You take me in.

Did you win, lose, or draw?
Is that a mirror or a window?
Is that a hearse or a limousine?
Have you had enough of real life yet?

Go to where you can't see who you are.
How much can you take and how long can you
go?
Can you laugh at everything yet?

In the dark night
I hear screaming, shooting, sirens, ambulances.
Don't get hurt.
Don't get destroyed.
Get back into bed.
Get away from it all.
Nobody listens to the sounds.
Who are we trying to kid?
They are so loud,
So clear
Is that someone else?
Or is it you?

— Susan Boerman

Stay In My Head For Awhile

I never mentioned a word,
All by myself.

Past reality has gone absurd,
Present under poor health.

With the future smiling above,
Knowing love at an impasse will connect.

The dreams and emotions resurrect,
By memories random select.

In a mind scattered and dangled,
Torn at every angle.
Falling at the ground,
With sounds of sadness and longing,
Left unguarded because she is not around.

Swept under the rug to be trampled and forgotten.

If I had known about the chair I sat in,
I never would have left your side.
Sitting down I know not where to begin.
Until you're here,
Time I will have to bide.

But for this moment,
Stay in my head for awhile.

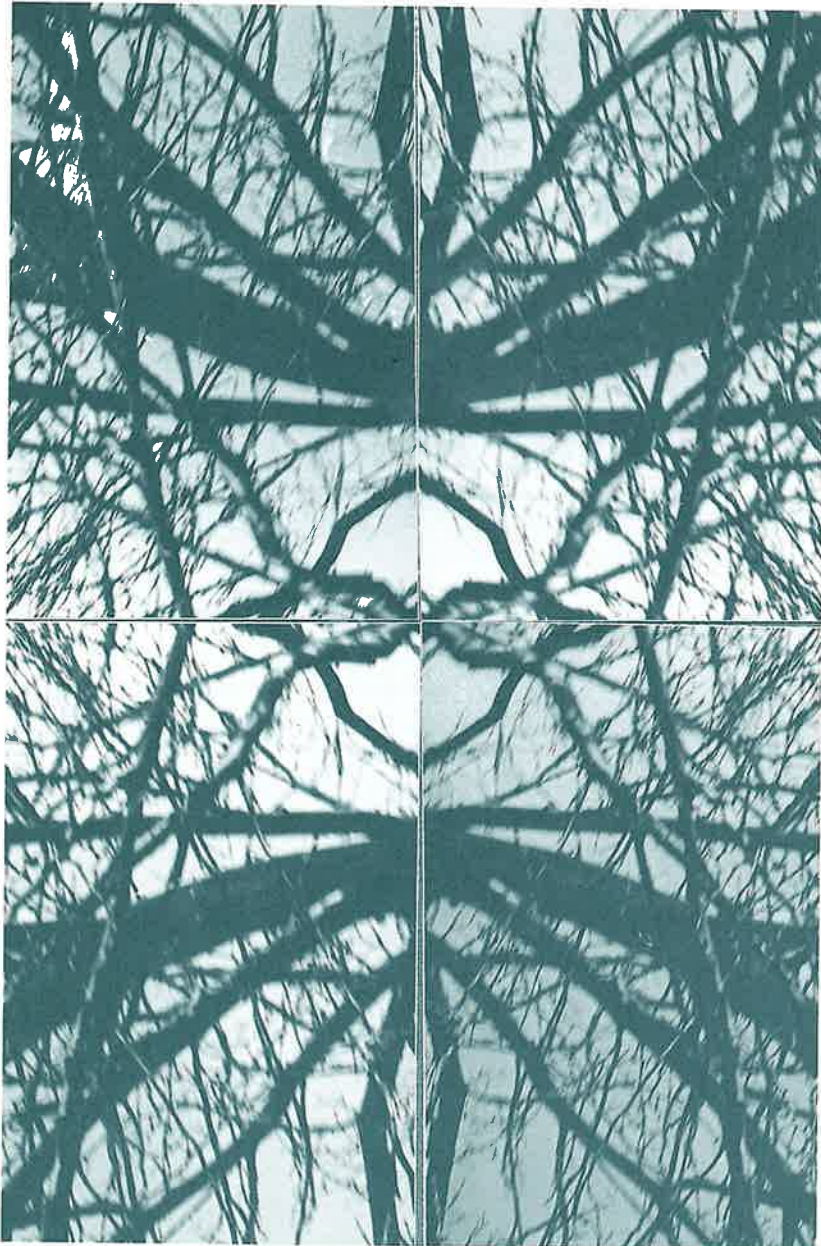
— Will Gowdy

A Crazy Kind of Love

Her eyes widened as a hand gripped her shoulder and pulled her backwards forcefully. Her purse fell to the ground with a clatter; she could hear the sound of her compact mirror breaking. A cloth covered her mouth and a sweet smell pervaded her nostrils as her mind filled with a cloud of grayish haze. She lost consciousness before her knees gave out, and her attacker caught her easily in his arms.

It was the sound of a car door slamming that brought her slowly back into consciousness. She tried to force her eyelids open, wondering why they felt so heavy, and realized after a moment that there was something over her face preventing her from seeing. She felt instantly claustrophobic and fought the nausea that welled up in her throat. She breathed in deeply, bowing her head slightly and wondered if she should speak. She remembered walking out of work earlier, it seemed just seconds ago, and trying to get her key into the lock on her car door. The memories of a strong arm around her came back suddenly, and she struggled to move. She was tied up, her arms were bound behind her and her feet were tied together too. She was sitting down, on a hard wood floor it felt like. She didn't have a gag on.

She cleared her throat, and heard the door open. Her heart pounded frantically, she looked towards the sound, hoping that her blindfold would magically disappear and she would be able to see her abductor.



Esther Rock

"You're awake," she heard.

"Who are you?" she asked, turning her head so that her ear was aimed toward the voice.

She felt a hand on her the top of her head, moving her forward so that the blindfold could be untied. The hands gently worked the knot at the back of her head and she blinked rapidly as the blindfold slipped away and the light pierced her eyes. The sun was setting, she must have been out for hours.

She looked up at the tall man before her; he was staring down at her calmly.

"I know you," she said slowly, cautiously. He was very tall and thin, with a stern looking jaw and pale eyes. She couldn't tell if they were blue or green in this light. Her eyes widened and her heart beat faster.

"James," she whispered. "What am I doing here?" she asked fearfully. She looked around at her surroundings, a beautifully stained hardwood floor and a stone fireplace in the corner. It was a rustic cabin of some sort with a great deer's head over the doorway.

He knelt down before her, touching her hair gently. She pulled away quickly. His hand jumped back and his eyes widened. "I... I brought you here," he whispered.

She stared at his hand, frozen in the air near her face and she wondered for a moment if he was going to hit her. Fear churned inside her and she felt

the tears start to form in her eyes. He shook his head quickly, picking her up easily, as though she weighed nothing.

"No, no!" he said quietly. "Don't cry. Don't cry Emma." He took her up the stairs. She fought to get out of his arms, but knew that if she fell it would do her no good since she was tied up. She relented at last, giving up her struggle, and simply screamed as loudly as she could.

He dropped her on a bed upstairs in one of the bedrooms. She screamed for what seemed like minutes before her throat gave up and she sobbed weakly on the bed. "No one can hear you Emma. No one," he said.

"You're psychotic," she sobbed. "What do want from me?"

His head twitched violently and she closed her eyes as he again raised his hand to her face. She winced, waiting for the blow, but it never came. Instead, a tender hand grazed her cheek patiently. "You know you wouldn't have come otherwise," he said. His fingers brushed a tear from her cheek, and he pushed her long blond hair from her face. She looked so beautiful like this. Her green eyes were rimmed with red.

"So you decided to kidnap me to convince me?"

He looked confused for a moment, then shook his head. "No, it's not like that. You'll be happy, you'll see. Just like always Emma. It will be just

as good as it always is," he said enthusiastically. A great smile broke across his face and she felt a pang of fear again. She fought the tears that were forming and tried to pull out of the ties that were holding her.

He saw what she was doing and leapt up to help her. "Oh, sorry," he said quickly. "I forgot to take those off of you."

She froze as he touched her, wrapping his arms around her torso to reach her bound wrists. The rope loosened after a minute and she pulled her arms quickly in front of her. She rubbed her hands together, noticing the red burn that had formed on each wrist. James leaned over, his head down as he untied the rope on her ankles. With a ferocious kick, she knocked his jaw with her free foot and sent him sprawling on the floor. He shook his head with bewilderment, not even realizing that she had gone running down the stairs. He heard the door fly open before he even stood up.

He rose, rubbing his sore jaw and trotted down the stairs. "Emma, come back here," he yelled tiredly.

He stood and trotted down the stairs and out the door. He wasn't worried. He knew these woods better than he did his own neighborhood in Seattle. He had been coming here since he was a little kid, his mom had always taken him. And now, chasing after her, he knew where she'd run. She'd go towards the only sound out here, the river. He caught a glimpse of her blue shirt, so obvious against the

snow covered ground.

He caught up to her at last, and she lunged at him with fury, screaming loudly as she did. He wrapped his arms around her protectively, not sure if he was preventing her from hurting him or herself. She beat her fists against his chest wildly, and he pulled her against him, reveling in the feeling of her in his arms. Finally she gave up, allowing him to again pick her weary body up and carry her back to the cabin.

Hopelessness filled her. She didn't know where she was. There didn't seem to be anyone around that would even hear her when she screamed. She had seen the truck, but it had been locked when she tried the door. And there didn't seem to be a path leading anywhere, not even giving any indication of which way the truck had come. The falling snow blanketed everything, silencing her fear for a moment, making her only aware of how cold she truly was.

Her breath came quickly, forming little clouds as soon as it exited her mouth. She found herself almost longing for the warmth of the cabin. When he carried her up the stairs and across the porch into the house, she felt the heat surround her and at once felt better. He set her down, letting her feet linger on the floor for a moment before he let her go. He closed the door and stared at her. "I trust you're not going to try leaving again?" he asked almost affectionately. A smile played in the corner of his

mouth and she nodded, again feeling the helplessness.

He led her towards the bathroom and when he suggested she take a bath, she accepted readily. He had left some clean clothes on the bed in an upstairs bedroom, and when she was done she dressed quickly.

She walked downstairs, not wanting to face him but needing to know why she was here. He turned to watch her descend, smiling a little as she tentatively walked closer. She stopped at the edge of the living room, her eyes wary.

"Come over here. It's warm by the fire," he said.

She shook her head, sitting at the very edge of the room, a little cold from her wet hair.

"I won't bite," he said quietly.

"You abducted me James. What am I supposed to think?" she asked cynically.

She watched him nod thoughtfully, then turn back to the fire. A piece of wood fell off the grate to the bottom of the stone fireplace, glowing red for a moment, then dying out. He stood up and her heart stopped briefly. He walked away from her, then sat down further away from the fire. He pointed to his earlier seat and nodded to her. "Go ahead, take it. I don't want you catching cold."

She didn't move for a second, wanting to defy him but at the same time a droplet of water fell from her hair on to her neck and she shivered. She stood

up and sat on the rug where he had been, relishing the feel of the heat on her face.

They were silent for a moment before she said, "Why did you bring me here?"

"It was the only way I could think of," he returned.

Later, when he signaled for her to follow him up the stairs, she did so without question. She didn't struggle with him as he tied her arms together, this time with a soft tie, then bound her to the bed. "I won't hurt you Emma, I just can't risk you going away."

She nodded, not understanding, not caring, just wanting to go to sleep and wake up in another place. She was able to roll on her side despite the restraints and she turned away from him. When he crawled into the bed next to her, she winced. But he never touched her. He simply pulled the covers up around her and rolled over on his side, his back facing hers. Minutes later, she fell asleep.

She found herself in a rugged truck James was driving along the ocean. She gazed happily out the window at the moon's reflection on the water. She wiggled next to him on the leather bench seat and his arm pulled her close. He kissed the top of her head as he drove. The image changed suddenly and there was a struggle. There were clothes on the floor, and a gun fell from his grasp. The report deafened her and her hands clapped over her ears as she spun to see if James had been shot. She saw a

woman, someone that was familiar to her, a vaguely distant acquaintance, falling to the floor with her hand clutching her stomach. She felt a panic set in as the blood covered the floor and she heard herself scream, though she didn't wake up. It was daylight suddenly, and she saw light streaming in through the barred windows of an old warehouse. She was bound to a large metal object, a broken water heater she thought, and her head fell forward out of exhaustion. She didn't know where he was, she hadn't seen him in hours. Her arms ached from the rope around them, and when James walked in, she cried out to him, begging him to untie her. He walked over to her and stood before her, obviously noticing the tear in her shirt, and the red burns across her wrists and ankles. He smiled at her, a cruel and wicked smile, and laughed loudly.

She gasped and awoke quickly, trying to shake the nightmare from her head. She felt an arm caress her shoulder and pull her closer. She closed her eyes again.

The sun lit up the bedroom long before her senses returned. She felt peaceful, comfortable. She rolled onto her back, running her hands through her hair. She subconsciously knew that something was different, but she stretched and momentarily didn't care.

She felt an arm encircle her waist and she smiled, pressing herself against the warm body next to her. Her hands grazed his arm, feeling the tight

muscle in his upper arm. A mouth nuzzled her neck, kissing her gently. She whimpered slightly, feeling the stubble tickle her soft skin.

Her eyes fluttered open then, a smile playing on her face. She froze when she realized where she was. She flew out of the bed, pulling the blanket with her. She gasped when she saw that her clothes were on the chair next to the bed. She backed against the wall and felt a wave of terror as he gazed appreciatively at her naked arms as she wrapped herself more tightly in the blanket.

"What's wrong?" he asked sleepily.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"I was sleeping," he said, "Until you started wiggling about. Then I woke up."

She watched him carelessly stretch, his bleach blond hair falling across the pillow in unkempt little spikes. The dark roots shone against the white of the pillow, and he rubbed his eyes lazily. His eyes focused on her after a minute, the bright blue piercing her, and he smiled evenly. He stood up then, and she looked away. He wore nothing, and when he stretched his arms above his head she stared at the floor and blushed. She knew that she had just been willingly pressed up against his bare skin. She knew it and he knew it. When he pulled on a pair of jeans, she allowed her gaze to travel back up to his face and she dared herself to speak.

"How did I get untied?" she asked after she dressed and followed him down the stairs.

He poured two glasses of orange juice from the fridge and handed one to her, "Last night you looked so uncomfortable I had to untie you."

"And my clothes?" she whispered.

He stared at her for a minute and shrugged. He was quiet while he put the juice back in the refrigerator. "Come off it Emma," he finally said. "You know you want this."

She didn't say anything, so he smiled pleasantly and began making breakfast. The smell of the eggs made her stomach rumble, and he grinned at her, "Hungry?" he asked.

She nodded. The meal seemed to give him a new found energy. When he was finished he rose from the table, and she backed away from him, the adrenaline rushing through her gut suddenly. He gazed calmly over to her and set his plate on the counter.

"Are you scared of me Emma?" he asked softly. He walked slowly towards her, watching her back away from him with each step he took. Her back was to the wall after a moment, and she felt the fear inside her when he pressed up against her.

She stared down nervously. "Yes," she answered honestly.

His hand pulled her chin up to look in her eyes. "Even after last night?" he asked, a hint of smugness present in his tone.

"I don't remember last night James," she whispered.

His lips touched hers tentatively, then pulled away. "That's a shame."

He walked away and she felt alone, pressed up against the wall.

"Why do you do this to me?" she asked him loudly.

He froze in his tracks, then spun around. He stormed toward her angrily. "Why do you think?"

She stared to back away again but he grabbed her by the arm. "No, don't you walk away from me! Why do you think I do this to you?"

"I don't know!" she yelled back.

"Do you think it's because I don't care?" he asked.

"You have to care, you care too much. Everything you do is about me! Everywhere you go, I have to go! You hurt me, you scare me, but it's always me!"

He looked wild and angry. "Would you rather it be someone else?"

She shook her head, not knowing what to say. The feeling of his large hand gripping her wrist was the reminder of how it always was. She'd have a bruise the next day, which he would replace with a new one later, the way she liked it. The fear reminded her that she was alive, the angry words made her know that he cared. After all, why would anyone dedicate his life to abusing her if he didn't care? It had to be love.

She felt a hand grip her by the hair and he

jerked her head back roughly. She felt a twinge in her scalp as he kept her head at the painful angle. His light eyes penetrated hers and she saw an evil and familiar look there. He held her there for a moment, his fist clenching her hair and his arm wrapped around her tightly, before he kissed her gently.

When he let her go roughly, he turned around and walked away, leaving her to catch her breath. She knew what would happen next. He would take her upstairs, love her for hours and then leave. No matter how rough he was, she could take it. And then it would happen again, in some other place, some other day. Maybe he would leave her alone for a day this time, or maybe for months. But never for too long. He couldn't live without her any longer than she could without him.

She watched him walk out the front door and after several minutes she decided to see what the morning weather was like. She stepped out the front door, noticing that his truck was gone. She stood on the porch for a minute when a hand gripped her shoulder. A cloth covered her mouth and a sweet smell filled her nostrils, she felt her heart beat faster. It was a crazy kind of love, she thought sleepily, a cloud of grayish haze filling her mind.

— Leah Hover

The Clock

The knight is perched,
On his imitation, silver-plated throne.
I cannot fight him any more,
He has worn my shield, clean through.
It gets more difficult to stand,
His blessed sword upon my
Shoulder is much too heavy for me.
As the bystanders watch,
They claim their innocence
Even though they are more guilty
Than I.

For what, no one knows;

He doesn't care;

He makes crimes up on his own.

All the mirrors in his decapitated forest
Are covered by his cloak.

All the clocks are suspended;

Some one stopped them long ago,

For reasons, there really are none.

This is done, just like all his

Actions are done... just in spite.

To confuse and make the situation

Even worse than it appears to be

All just in spite... What's that you say... he is gone for the
day...

There is no one to protect the forest... well then what
shall we do?

We live our lives in fear, brought on

By him, more so than the church instills.

So what shall we do while he is away?

We were never taught to play

Only to make war and how to watch

Others make peace.

Why is it there is nothing that we can do?

The egg shells are gone, what shall we walk on?

The curtains are drawn askew.

I am curious as to where that light is coming from.

I followed the noise to the one idle mantle clock

Which is producing the most aggravating noise.

How do I stop it?

The beating of a vital heart, maybe hit it, drop kick it,

Hide it in an isolated area

Or maybe take the source of the sound

And crush it.

— Carolyn Briguglio

I look in the sky, I look in the air,
 I see in this world that no one really cares.
 Mental, sexual and physical abuse,
 Some of the things that Pandora let loose.
 The box is open, come and look inside,
 To hear the sound of souls that have died.
 The light at the tunnel is broken or gone,
 Your god has left you to carry on,
 Our saviors come but fade away,
 To the other side where they laugh and play.
 I wonder what happened, why I'm on this path,
 If this is the force they can take it all back.
 — Fran Whitney III

There are so many things I want to say,
 The meaning of unconditional love
 For you is still here.
 You imagined me to be
 Sweet and innocent
 All my life.
 But I changed,
 And perhaps for the better.
 You look upon me
 As a young child that grew up to
 Be a young lady,
 And so forth a woman.
 I looked upon you
 As a father figure,
 A prince,
 And upon this I still
 Do.
 But more as a friend and ex-lover.
 The memories that we shared are content
 In our hearts,
 I parted away from you
 The moment I left you.
 And likewise
 We changed as the seasons change,
 And grew more from
 Each other than ever.
 For that I am grateful
 That you came into my life,
 As I did yours.
 — Esther Rock

Hot Time In the Old Town

I sat down in my favorite chair with a sigh of satisfaction, book in hand, and inched closer to the black wood stove that heated my recreation room. It was an unexpected evening of leisure allowed by a sudden snowstorm raging outside. In contented pleasure, I studied the shadows of flames reflected in the stove's front window and my mind went back many years to the old black iron stove that had graced our family kitchen. I felt a tenderness toward that old stove and the easy lifestyle we had lived around it. Mama was by nature, happy and outgoing....open, so it came as a surprise to me to learn her secret about the stove. She was some woman!

Mama was a small woman, as thin and flexible as cooked spaghetti, with a hidden reserve of energy that snapped to action in an instant like the elastic of a slingshot. Her face resembled an Indian apple doll that had weathered a few seasons. Her hair was pulled back taut with an efficient braided bun at the nape of her neck. Her blue-flecked brown kind eyes, stern in command, twinkled in humor, topped by somewhat bushy eyebrows expressed the what-will-we-do-now world of her own experience. Her nose, as she herself described, looked like the end of the turkey that went over the fence last, and her thin lips that covered small front protruding teeth with the soft charm of imperfection, had never worn lipstick. It was her hands with the thin gold wedding ring that commanded my respect. Strong, thin

long fingers, projected from blue-veined smooth hands that could do anything from tatting lace to repair on the plumbing system Her hands had milked 14 cows a day and left a long remembered red mark on my bottom on many occasions.

But one thing those hands were incapable of doing was cooking. God knows, she tried! The old black stove that heated the kitchen and boiled the vats of white linens for the laundry, seemed to balk at her whenever she started to cook. Oh, she struggled in determination, but results were disastrous. She served rubbery chicken, gray roasts, flat hard cakes, cookies burned on the bottom, pies that ran all over the oven while burned juices clouded the room. It was sad. "That darn oven!" she was heard to cry again and again. Papa said they were baby's first words.

I had witnessed, on more than one occasion, her frustrated kick at the ungiving iron black leg of the stove, as though the two of them were at war. She couldn't let Papa know how she hated the stove because it was his pride and joy. He loved to tell us how, soon after he and Mama were married and had bought the house, with only a few dollars in his pocket, he happened by a Post Office/Shipping auction, and had bought the stove for one dollar. He always paused here, with a nod of his head to emphasize his shrewdness, and then went on to describe how he had polished each part and lovingly assembled it piece by piece, as though it was

his creation. If Papa was disappointed in Mama's inability to master the oven, it was never evident. I recall Papa's stab at humor after a particularly disappointing meal. "Look at it this way, your Mother's a religious cook... it's either a sacrifice or a burnt offering that she's offering up. So, say your prayers and eat a sandwich."

Mama, because she was sensitive in this area, left the room mumbling retaliation about somebody's sick sense of humor and that the stove should be done away with. We knew we could find her deep in her favorite soft-down chair, immersed in a Western novel, that would put all memory of the dinner behind her, as the battle of Red River Junction at Dry Gulch captured her attention. Mama was an avid reader. It seemed to calm and restore her happy disposition, a comfort to us all.

In the aftermath of growing up, marrying, child rearing, widowed, complete with the empty nest syndrome, I developed a longing to travel and a strong desire to visit my mother's country. I was astonished to find how smoothly my travels to the continent developed and progressed, once I made my mind up. Traveling along the Danish countryside in a comfortable train compartment, I admired the beauty of the vivid green rolling hills, flowering forests, fields resplendent with bright red poppies and acres of vivid yellow mustard grass. I saw the rivers, animal stock in herd, beautiful stallions, grazing cattle, bunching sheep, red tiled towering churches

that proclaimed hamlets of thatched roofed houses and farms and I wondered anew, how she could have left the beautiful country of her birth.

I tensed as I gathered my luggage and my wits, to face the unfamiliar cobble-stoned station amid the unfamiliar speech of a jostling crowd and debarked anticipating this last leg of the journey to reach my goal: Mama's home town.

As the taxi withdrew, I knocked at the door of a quaint cottage with shaking hands and was ushered in by a blushing, ill-at-ease smiling peasant woman who led me through a small hallway into an immaculate, comfortably furnished living room replete with a highly polished piano and a good sized television. A wizened elderly woman, white hair piled becomingly atop her head, sat in a wheelchair smoking a Marlboro, much to my surprise, and commanded in a soft voice, that I enter so she could get a good look at me in the sunlight streaming through sparkling windows. A new magazine was turned up in her lap. "And what brings you to Vejlo?" she asked cutting through protocol as old people and children are privileged to do.

"Hello, cousin Hetta" I laughed. "Well I didn't come seeking the family heirlooms," which brought a grunt from her. "I want to seek out any family that's here, and maybe get to see the old homestead and territory, maybe hear some family lore. Fanny, in Copenhagen gave me your address as you are the last of the family living in this remote village."

"Yes, my husband's work kept us here. He was Gamekeeper of the Baron's estate and after he died, I stayed on these many years. All the other went away to seek their fortunes - your mother to America, and my old legs don't hold up well, but I am content. But now, go with Carl Peter, my grandson, and see your grandfather's mill, if there's anything left of it, and see where we all grew up. After dinner we can look at some photos I have saved. I don't know who will want them when I've gone." With that she lit a cigarette as a dismissal to me, and picked up the magazine from her lap.

We returned to a resplendent meal and Hetta brought forth the photos. The brown daguerre-otypes captured a landscape almost duplicating the scene I had just covered by car. Vast, lonely marshland and sea and groups of people, unsmilingly posing for a special occasion. Pictures of Mama passed before me and I saw a happy, smiling child of early years, change to a sullen, reluctant young lady trying to avoid the camera.

"Whatever made her change like that?" I inquired of Hetta.

"It was the fire," she spoke in undertone, and looking around asked, "Did she ever mention it? Oh my, it was a disaster. She burned the house down. Her nose always in a book...always reading. Her mother had rushed off to help a neighbor giving birth and the menfolk were all out in the fields working. She was left in charge of cooking the head

cheese, made with lots of pork fat, and she fired up under the pots and then went out to read under the trees. By the time she smelled the burning, it was too late. We couldn't save much and in the end, the only piece left was the old stove sitting right in the center of the yard. The whole family had to be farmed out until grandfather rebuilt with the help of friends and neighbors. And your mother always claimed that the stove had it in for her... she would never go to the barn where it was stored."

That rang a bell with me. Very curiously I asked, "What became of the old stove?"

"Well, that's a strange thing. Your mother's Uncle Hans sent it to her as a joke, when she married. He broke it down and crated it O.K., but sent it to her maiden name with the wrong address and I guess it just sat in the Post Office until it was auctioned off."

—Ella Bazzinotti

The Seance

"O.K., once more, please explain to me why you threw the chair out the window."

I had never thought that being the president of the Paprika State University Seance Club could get me into so much trouble. I took a deep breath and explained what happened for the fifth time that day to Dean Acheson and Dean Rusk.

"We through the chair out the window because Valhalla was sitting in it holding us hostage."

Both Deans looked at me blankly for a moment. "And who is Valhalla again?" they finally said.

"He's an ancient demi-god in Norse mythology."

They looked at me blankly again. "Oh." said Dean Acheson. "And what was Valerie doing in your room?"

"It's Valhalla! Val-hall-ah!!!" yelled Christian vehemently. "He was in our room holding us hostage. We summoned him up for a report for our Mythology in Literature class, and he thought he was still in some ancient Norse war or something 'cause he took us captive!! O.K.!?"

"There will be no yelling in this room!" yelled Dean Rusk. "You know who I blame for all this?" he asked Dean Acheson, "That rock-and-roll music! That's what! They listen to the rock-and-roll, then

they do the drugs, and they think they're Jimmy Page or somebody like that, capable of summoning up spirits from the neatherworld!!"

"I knew I shouldn't have worn my Led Zeppelin shirt." I thought to myself.

"Do you know what the drugs do to you son, do you??" Dean Rusk continued. Before I could answer he said, "They screw up your brain! They give you brain damage! I can stand the people who want to be like that nice clean-cut Mike Jordan, and I can put up with the people who want to be like that social deviant Dennis Rodman, but I draw the line at devil-worshipping!

"Actually seances aren't satanic rituals at all," Christian said. "Look, it was his idea to call back his spirit, and he was in a really pissed off mood, and he had this wicked big sword, and finally after an hour, we distracted him and threw the chair out the window. That's when the R.A.'s came in."

"I don't care what they aren't!!" yelled Dean Rusk.

"Please Ted remember your heart condition," reminded Dean Acheson.

Just then Christian closed his eyes, and started to sway back and forth, while humming. I knew what he was doing and I was a bit nervous.

"What's he doing?" asked Dean Acheson.

"It looks like he's trying to summon a spirit," I said.

"That's nonsense, he can't do that! It's impos-

sible! Isn't it? Is he really going to? He can't, can he?" stammered Dean Acheson.

"Do you want to be expelled young man?!" yelled Dean Rusk. "There will be no conjuring up spirits in my office!! Is that understood?!"

Just then Torvold, the Norse God of Vengeance appeared! Christian had actually done it! He brought him back!!

"Get them!" Christian said, and pointed at the Deans.

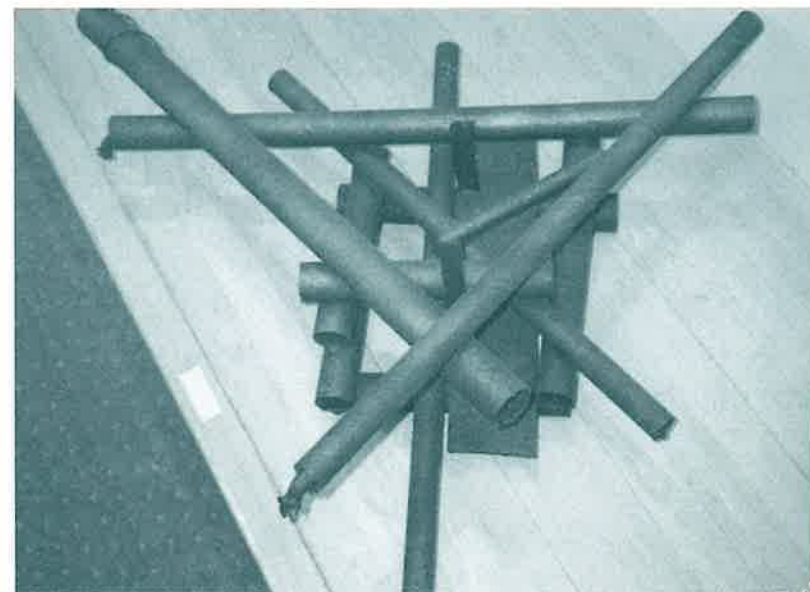
Before the Deans could move Torvold had brought out his sword, and chopped off their heads with one mighty swing.

Then he disappeared.

"Cool!" I said. "How'd you do that?"

"He owed me a favor.", Christian replied.

"Oh, OK." I said. I looked at the mess in the



David Adolphson

office. "We probably should get out of here, huh?"
"Yeah I guess so. Race you back to the dorm!"
—Rick Collins

Shades

The green curtains are pulled back
They reveal the world to me
As I peer out
I see nothing
The fog has drifted in
It covers the earth
Nothing is clear
It reminds me of a rainy night years ago
The raindrops danced on the windows
And the fog dressed the ground in a thick layer of
white
It was beautiful then
But the fog never lifts
It just drifts from one place to another
Now I fear the rain has drowned you-
It's all too much
I pull the ties from the curtains
Their green hides the earth from my eyes.
—Shannon Frye



David Greer

The Race

My right hand is springing off my chest, against the rapid beats of my heart. I am experiencing a familiar feeling of sickness in my stomach that developed from nerves and excitement. I feel chunks rising in my throat. The red, white, and blue colors blend together into a blur while I stare at the flag in the corner of the room. "Stay focused," I constantly remind myself.

I take slow deep breaths. "Where is the brown paper bag when I need it," I think. "Or the plastic bag in case I do throw up?"

My devilish inner voice threatens me, "If you ruin this moment by doing something stupid, I will kill you."

I turn my head to the right and feel comfort as I recognize the familiar faces of my cheering section in the stands. I feel a little more at ease to see my family and friends looking proud just for me.

Silence is called over the microphone. The Star Spangle Banner has begun. I sing as silently as possible. It would be unkind of me to ruin the harmony for the athletes around me.

"This is really it," I think. "It is the moment I have been waiting for during all the hellish practices and the torturous workouts. Every pound I lifted was for this. Every lap I swam was to reach this point. I am finally here." I lift my head with confidence and breathed in the chlorine.

"Who do I think I am kidding?" A pain shoots

through my stomach. Porcelain is my only thought.

As the song ends, my mind escapes my thoughts and focuses on the cheers and shouts around me. The first race is called and the first round of swimmers walk toward their blocks. I stand by the side of the pool and proceed to cheer on my teammates. After three events, it is finally my turn. I walk with my head down to the end of the pool. I do not want any disruptions affecting the advice I was just given moments before by my coach. I stand behind the white block. I study the black "4" in the middle of it. It is something I have stared at so many times in the past. Before every race my eyes are focused on the same block I see now in front of me. It never changes. I can never understand why my eyes get fixed on this mass of concrete.

My feeling of protection is detached as I remove the warm-up suit that is covering my body. I strip down to my navy blue bathing suit. Now the adrenaline is pumping hard. Swinging my arms around, I do a few last stretches. "This is it," I think to myself. "No time to back out now."

It seems unimportant to glance at my parents. Their expectations were something I did not need to worry about now. After all, this is my race. I deserve all the credit. I am the one who did all the work and preparation for this big event. I am interested to see how much support I will get if I do not end up with the gold that is in my favor. Their support keeps me going. Their pressure though, makes it almost worth

quitting.

Adjusting my lucky bathing cap and goggles, the starter comes over the microphone again. Immediately, billions of "what if" questions jumped into my mind.

"What if I am unable to finish?"

"What if my goggles fall off?"

"What if my goggles fill up with water?"

"What if I miss the wall on my turn?"

Suddenly there is no time to think. No time to do anything but step up onto the rough block of concrete as I hear "swimmers step up" in the silenced pool area. Now bending over, I grip the edge of the block as I hear "swimmers take your mark". My hands reach to the sides of my freshly painted silver toe nails.

The gun shoots off and so do I. The start feels right. My feet kick rapidly to enable my arms to glide through the water. My head stays down with my chin tucked into my neck. I only see the black line on the bottom of the pool underneath me. "Perfect," I think.

"Wait, what is that?" One... two... three... more gun shots are heard. I surface the water. Unbelievable, lane two has false started. We are called back for another try.

Swimming back to the wall, I dread climbing to the deck and putting myself back through this torture again. I pick myself up out of the pool with my arms and grab onto the block. I hear my name

shouted out from the crowd. I look at my coach for reassurance but he looks more nervous than I. One hand holds his clipboard and timer. The other hand is held up to his face while he bites his fingernails. His gray hair and wrinkles age him ten to twenty years. He catches my eye and cheer and shouts "come on, just like the last time, you can do it." He takes his hand from his mouth and claps me on .

The starter gets back on the microphone.

"Is it time?" I think again. Another pain shoots through my stomach as I step to the top of the block again.

—Nicole Green



Allison Schuh

MacGowen

This apple has an odd shape, it's not round, it's not oval, and is slightly defaced, in random places it soft, and a little misplaced, it got its name, but I'm not sure how, it goes by MacGowen, that's not a brand name, it has no face and shows no emotion, it's rather discolored, and kind of maimed, it's green and red, and has no fame, it sits in the store with no where to go, no arms, no legs, not even a stem, it has a belly button, so it was conceived from somewhere, some dirt, some soil, and a little bit of air, some acid rain, and some day it will grow, just a silent apple, that wants to go home, it waits in the store till someone appears, and the light hits the apple with just the right glare, and says to the man "hey, pick me I'm over here," he goes to the cashier and says "how much will this be?" "seventy-nine cents,"

"Thank you have a nice day."


—Kati Ross

Spring

Heaven releases a wind
And it wisps through
The air, dancing with
Leaves as it makes
Its way down,
Cascading over the earth
And enveloping the world's
Entirety sending life into all things

—Sara MacGregor

The Invitation

 On a gloomy Sunday morning in the middle of Spring, my mom invited a whole bunch of people for a rather late lunch. It was an interesting selection of "friends," some of whom I had heard her speak unpleasantly about. Many of them were married adulteresses sleeping with their group of friends' husbands, others were planning murders trying to end the lives of those who were involved with their husbands. My mom's idea of getting everyone together was to implement a form of revenge which she had planned for each and every one of these women.

As she cooked the tremendous banquet she had been planning all week long, I sat at the Mexican-style kitchen table, and watched her prepare the two-page long menu she had pinned on the wall the day before.

It all seemed so fancy and delicious. I kept wondering why she was trying so hard for it to look presentable and inviting, when I knew she despised all of these people.

A large variety of spices were assorted around the kitchen counter, and I had noticed a different one placed right in between the salt shaker and the paprika. It looked kind of blue, and I could not recognize it. This past summer I had worked at a farm separating, drying, and selecting spices and herbs, so that I knew every existing spice normally used in the kitchen. Only, I had never before seen this one.

I got up from my chair and stood beside her, grabbed the small plastic bottle with the blue contents and looked at it for a whole minute. I shifted it to a 180 degree angle and smelled it. I still could not recognize the strange smell.

"Mom, what spice is this, I've never seen it before. It smells kinda funny."

She smiled and said, "That's not a spice, honey, that's detergent."

I thought about her answer for five seconds with total confusion, and asked her about it. I was innocent, and curious.

"Detergent?? Really. What's it doing here?"

She looked at me and smiled, in a secure and odd way and said, "Oh, I just thought I'd add a little of it to the food, you know, maybe give it a distinctive taste."

"Excuse me?!?" I couldn't believe my own ears. These words which were calmly coming out of my mother's mouth, like fireballs ready to burn the whole kitchen down, left me in complete awe. I was shaking with fear. I looked at my mom; she looked so secure as she chopped up ten cucumbers at one time.

"Mom, did I interpret this wrong, I mean, you just told me that you are going to add detergent to the food, correct?"

With that same smile and cheerful voice, she answered, "Correct. That's right, sweetie, I intend to poison all of the people who are coming over

today."

I was so confused. I didn't know what to think, or do for that matter. "Mom," I chuckled nervously as I spoke, "You're not really doing this, are you? This is all a really sick joke, isn't it? I mean, you would never... Why would you?!?"

She turned to me and spelled out her reason, "It's called revenge. I'm doing this for their own good. You know, deep down they'll thank me for letting them leave their deceitful little lives this way. Look at every one of these crazy and pathetic situations they're, not only in, but place each other in as well...."

I started laughing hysterically, practically yelling, "What, Mom! I think the only crazy and pathetic person here, is you!"

She just smiled positively and turned back to her stewing. I thought to myself, what could this woman, my own mother, be thinking at this very moment?! I had absolutely no idea. I knew, far enough, that she, herself, was not sure what she was doing.

I tried to act calm and think of something quick to stop her from committing such an insane act, but nothing came to mind. I felt sick, I wanted to stop her but I just stood there, hypnotized, holding the detergent in my hand.

Suddenly, the phone rang. I could not move. Without any reaction to the ringing, my mom looked at me funny and started walking towards the phone.

I was frozen; I had always been the first to jump up and answer every phone call made to this house.

She picked it up and answered it with her usual "hello," and cheerfully chatted away. By this time, the detergent bottle was so hot in my hand, that it felt like it was burning in flames.

"Mel! Telephone!!" I snapped out of my deep concentration and walked over to where my mom was standing. "It's Oliver," she said smiling, and handed me the phone.

Not wanting him to know anything about what my mom was up to, I cleared my throat and answered sweetly, "Hello, you!"

"Mel, hey! What's up?" There was a twinge of nervousness in his voice. I detected something strange and awful was going on. Oliver and I had been going out for almost a year already, so I could recognize the symptoms of his wrong doings.

Acting as if I had not noticed, smiling I answered, "Mmmmm... nothing, really. What about with you?"

"I've got something I need to tell you," he said. As anxious as I was to know what was on his mind, I simply asked calmly, "What's that?"

I remembered back to Thanksgiving break when I had caught him in bed having sex with another girl. He had introduced her to me as Cassandra, his long-time favorite cousin. It had taken me almost a month to recover. I forgave him then, but I was not about to relive through that emo-

tional hell all over again.

"After I dropped you off last night, I went back o that bar, at the Plaza—"

"— Simmons," I added.

"Yeah, Simmons, and saw Cassandra there all alone...."

My heart started beating faster, so fast that I felt it was going to blow up into bits and pieces.

"Yeah, carry on...." My face was turning crimson red, dripping like a faucet. I was holding the phone so tightly, my knuckles were as white as cow's milk. My other hand, holding the bottle, was squeezing so hard, it felt like the detergent was going to spill out onto the floor.

"Well... I drank some beers with her, she was depressed... Aaron, her boyfriend, had dropped her for his ex, and we went home together...."

I was speechless.

"Well, I didn't mean for it to happen, but it did, and I'm so sorry, I —"

I cut him off, "I can't believe this," I was infuriated, but suddenly I thought of something. "Hey, Oli, why don't you come over for lunch and we'll talk about it after."

With a feeling of surprise and relief, he blurted, "Sure, I'll be right over."

"Mom! Add another plate! Oliver is coming over!" I opened the practically cooked meal and sprinkled some detergent into what he liked most.

I rushed with the food to the already set table

and placed each dish and bowl in a scattered manner. Ten minutes later, the doorbell started ringing, and all of the guests, including Oliver, were showing up. My mom approached them and sat them at the table. Oliver sat next to me. Everyone started talking all at once, and they picked up their forks and started eating. Oliver tasted the salad and smiled nervously at me. I looked at my mom and she smiled. Everyone already had food in their mouths, when suddenly something happened. There was silence for half a minute. It began with a single thump, and soon after that more smiling heads hit the table. Everyone fell to the ground like sacks of potatoes. I was stunned. My mom's plan had finally finished them off. I had gotten back at Oliver for all of his cheating and now I no longer had to deal with it. I felt so free from frustrations, fury, and pain that I could not think of a single guilty feeling that I should have. I loved life right then and there. I looked at my mom and we both laughed hysterically. I found myself finally agreeing on something with her, and that was the importance of sweet revenge.

—Isabelle Iberkleid

Skeleton's Armor

My face is flushed and my cheeks are pink,
As I lay here in bed while I ponder and think,
Of all the could-be's of the weary world's woes,
The innocence of life and all that it knows,
Fighting itself and all of its foes.

Tempted to peek into the cluttered serenity,
My mind transcends onto another plane.
Deep down into the depths below,
Where even my spirits are afraid to go,
Lay the dusty ruins of memories.
They huddle around my feeling's door,
They get no less and expect no more,
For there are things of certain kind,
That are plopped right there inside my mind.
With no safety from the evils within,
With thought of freedom and where I've been.
I long to be back in the good old days,
To avoid complications within my life's maze
Where smiled caught eyes in so many ways,
Now all I can do is sit here and gaze.
Into the dark abyss that swallows me whole.
No more I play upon the grassy knoll.
What causes the tears to flow from the skies,
Which filled my darkest dungeons with lies.
My life lay before me which path do I take,
Which one do I choose that I'll not forsake,
For I know not where I'll travel to,
I question if I ever knew.

—Sara MacGregor
—Robert Boothby

Procrastinating on a Monday night

Procrastinating on a Monday night.
Why should I do it now, I had all day.
No rhyme or reason, no vision in sight.
We are in March, but my mind is in May.
My rationality gives me a fright,
The less I do the more I feel dismay.
When all rooms are dark, mine will have a light.
A sip of coffee and I'll be OK.
Sometimes I wish I could fly like a kite,
Have a disposition like a blue jay,
Or make myself blow up with dynamite.
Why is time something we have to obey?
It is deceitful and makes us uptight.
Today, tomorrow, the next day, I will wait,
There is no now when I procrastinate.
—Joseph Glauda

Expectations

A 4:00 am phone call pulls me from my sleep. I speak faintly into the phone and listen, as my younger sister sobs about having to leave for college soon. Out of the blue, I begin to laugh, she is so frightened of what is such a wonderful experience. I try my hardest to comfort her and I feel sorry for the girl two and a half hours away, that not long ago was me.

At eighteen years old I am the second born in my family, however the first to leave for school. I was always intrigued by education, by learning and teaching my new found knowledge to someone else. We always knew that I would go to college; I was the one who spoke so highly of getting a better education. I was the one running round chanting about how successful I would be someday. At nine, fourteen, and sixteen years old, it seemed so far away. I felt I had years ahead of me before I had to leave my family. Those years flew by and I stood, at eighteen years old, crying like a baby in my sister's arms.

"I'm so proud of you...."

I can hear my father's words echo in my head to this day.

"College is the best time of your life! You'll do great!"

My father is very special to me. I always consider his opinion and he has never given me bad advice. Still, as much as I admire him, I thought that

he was lying to me. How could I have such a great time away from everything I have ever known? I would be leaving my family; my best friend and my boyfriend all at once.

My best friend and I have one of those unsaid understandings. I don't have to tell her how much I love or cherish her, she just knows. We believe that's what makes us such great friends. To imagine her two and a half hours away was terrifying. Whose clothes would I borrow? Whose shoulder would I cry on? Whose ear would I bitch to?

Michael, my boyfriend, was my everything. He held me up when I was falling down. Michael had a way of making me laugh, even when I didn't want to. Between having to leave him, my best friend Alana, and my family, my world was falling apart piece by piece.

My best friend and my boyfriend were the hardest for me to say good-bye to, I thought I was losing the both of them. I tried so hard to keep my relationship with Michael going, yet it still seemed to slip away. At this point I hated everything about going to school. There was nothing I wanted more than to go home and return to the familiar life I was living before. Breaking up with Michael hurt and it was harder than I ever imagined it being. Alana, however, stood beside me the whole way, proving I would never have to worry about her slipping away.

My mother is a strong woman.

"Be strong... we all love you!"

Her words stung my heart. I was trying so hard to be as strong as she was, but how could I was I was all alone? I wanted this so badly; this was one of my dreams and now that it was coming true, all I wanted was to run and hide. I wanted my parents to take me home. I hated them for leaving me.

I gave up security, a special love, closeness with my sisters and my best friend, yet I gained a world of knowledge and strength in its place. I do not, and never will, regret the decision that I have made. However, at the time some trade-offs didn't seem to add up. I knew I wanted a higher education. I wanted to be one my own, experiencing new people and places but I didn't want to lost the people of my past in the process. I've learned and I've lost; I've cried and I've laughed and now I thank every person who pushed, pulled and stuck by my side every step of the way.

I feel foolish now, to look back and realize how scared I was. I was absolutely petrified to leave home. Too much change at once had me trembling with fear. And now, at four o'clock in the morning, I find the same words escaping my mouth that once had been spoken to me. "Be strong... it's the best time of your life...."

"It's normal to be scared... it's okay to cry, but I promise you, you will laugh at yourself when it's over."

I'm giving her advice once given to me by people who cared, loved and believed in me.

I struggle; I work; I hurt and I succeed. I never imagined that I would be able o stand on my own two feet without Michael. And how on earth did I survive listening to my best friend cry, laugh, and talk over the phone rather than in person? I don't know, but I did. I'm here, still in one piece, just as enthusiastic, if not more, about my future than I was when I left home. I met some great people and found out that my true friends and loved ones will always be there for me, no matter how far apart or close we may be. Somehow, in the end, I seem to understand that I've got top give just a little to gain a whole lot more.

—Christina Tarpey